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SUBJECT: THE OSCE'S CORFU PROCESS STARTS TO GROW LEGS

REF: A. USOSCE 249

[1](#)B. USOSCE 246

[1](#)C. USOSCE 231

[1](#)D. USOSCE 223

[1](#)E. USOSCE 200

[1](#)F. USOSCE 146

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) Following seven out of ten sessions of informal but carefully developed dialogue among OSCE PermReps under the umbrella of the Corfu Process (CP), a consensus has emerged that the discussions have served a useful purpose, particularly in three areas. First, the CP provides a strong answer to the incessant Russian demands for a dialogue on European Security (even if Moscow claims the CP is separate from their initiative for a European Security Treaty). Second, Europe is obviously not fully "whole, free and at peace," and a better analysis and consensus on where it falls short is clearly needed. Finally, the CP has revitalized the political dialogue and breathed new life into the sclerotic methods, procedures and reputation of the OSCE, offering a constructive path forward on addressing Europe's frozen conflicts. Yet, just as the CP has started to flesh out a purpose, it has been buffeted by two other emerging factors: the upcoming Kazakh Chairmanship of the OSCE and Astana's desire to host a summit next year.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The OSCE remains the only Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian forum embracing a comprehensive concept of security, involving human, economic and political-military dimensions, and where 56 states participate on an equal basis. It is in the interest of the United States to support and promote the CP, both as a means of tackling the lingering security concerns in Europe and developing a more effective regional framework for confronting 21st Century security challenges. USOSCE has put forward proposals that would deepen the dialogue in Vienna next year and extend it to a wider range of participants. While a challenge in some respects, the Kazakh Chairmanship and its ardent desire for a summit also present us with an opportunity to extend the influence of the OSCE in Eurasia and to gain greater Russian buy in to the organization. End summary.

Background

[1](#)3. (SBU) Sensing an opportunity during its 2009 OSCE Chairmanship, Greece has developed and nurtured a comprehensive dialogue within the OSCE on the nature and extent of continuing challenges to European and Eurasian security in the 21st Century. Known as the Corfu Process, it was launched at an informal OSCE Ministerial June 28-29, 2009, held on the Greek island of Corfu. Ministers agreed in Corfu that the dialogue was worth pursuing and tasked their Permanent Representatives in Vienna with following up. The Greeks scheduled ten informal PermRep meetings beginning early September to cover security challenges in each of the three dimensions, as well as more generalized discussions focusing on the work and accomplishments of the OSCE and the causes of conflict.

¶4. (SBU) Contemplating the added workload, many delegations initially wondered whether anything would really change, suggesting privately this was another futile effort by the OSCE to reinvent itself. Nevertheless, most delegations we met with in the past week, especially during and after the October 30-31 Ambassadors' Retreat, expressed pleasant surprise at the altered atmosphere and attitudes of participants. The discussions around the table, most recently during a November 2 stocktaking session, were remarkably responsive to the input and comments of other delegations and indicated that a subtle, more nuanced understanding of the concerns and priorities of every delegation is beginning to emerge. Delegations have frequently cited as factors in the change the active engagement by the U.S., the civil tone employed by both the Russian and U.S. delegations during meetings, and, most recently, the positive remarks about the OSCE and the Corfu Process at the Helsinki Commission October 28 by Assistant Secretaries Gordon and Posner and ASD Vershbow.

Nevertheless, any sort of cohesion around specific outcomes for the process is still hard to come by. In addition, the continued impasse over CFE and CSBMs with Russia will likely exert a negative influence. Delegations are now focusing on how to take the process forward in 2010 and build on the perceived progress.

Rubber Meets Road

¶5. (SBU) A key decision point for the CP will be at the OSCE's annual Ministerial Council, to be held December 1-2 in Athens. Participating States (pS) will be called upon to approve a Ministerial Declaration that reiterates the validity of OSCE principles and commitments--as well as the concept of comprehensive, cooperative and indivisible security--and pledges continuing strategic dialogue in the

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framework of the CP. In addition, there will likely be a Ministerial Decision outlining the next stage in the Process.

Together, these two documents should strike a balance between enough specificity to circumscribe the leeway of the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship and flexibility to underscore the need for continued and defined progress. Although the Greeks have also proposed a political declaration, many believe that this is mostly a "cover" to protect the Corfu Process declaration: when no consensus is reached on the political declaration-- as is likely--the Chair will plead for consensus on the Corfu declaration.

¶6. (SBU) There is a general consensus emerging on what the follow-on process for 2010 will involve. First, deeper and more extensive discussions should be held, focused on several key topics: conflict prevention and resolution; arms control and CSBMs; transnational threats and challenges; human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy; need for greater implementation of commitments; and ways to create, upgrade or make better use of existing OSCE mechanisms/instruments across all three dimensions. The informal CP meetings should be on a more or less monthly basis, and involve a wider range of participants, including from capitals, international organizations and civil society. U.S. suggestions on a new mechanism for more rapid and effective OSCE crisis response and suggestions for an informal working group to look ahead to possible concrete outcomes have, on the whole, been warmly received. Second, a more formal process, such as joint FSC/PC meetings or a "Committee of the Whole" might be needed to approve any recommendations developed in the informal meetings.

Russia

¶7. (SBU) The CP presents Moscow with a dilemma, which it has so far opted to sidestep. Given the fact that the process was launched in part to address Russian concerns about an uneven security landscape in Europe --USOSCE has publicly thanked Russia on several occasions for inspiring the Corfu Process dialogue--Russia should have embraced the reassessment the CP represents. However, in reaffirming the central role of the OSCE and its comprehensive approach in European security, the CP sidetracks Russia's intention to confine discussions to hard security and produce a binding

Treaty on European security. Despite the insistence of an overwhelming majority of pS that all discussions on European security should be concentrated within the CP and the OSCE, the Russians have insisted on the creation of a parallel track in other fora. As if to underscore their ambivalence, even as Russia participates, often in a somewhat reluctant fashion, in the CP discussions, they have sent conflicting signals on their intention to present a draft European security treaty text in Vienna and elsewhere the week before the Athens Ministerial.

Platform for Cooperative Security

¶8. (SBU) During the course of the CP discussions, Russian representatives have insisted on a high-level meeting of the five major European security organizations -- OSCE, NATO, CIS, CSTO and the EU. Russia has suggested that this meeting could take place under the auspices of the OSCE's Platform for Cooperative Security (PCS). Agreed to at the 1999 Istanbul Summit, the PCS encourages a mutually reinforcing working relationship between the OSCE and other organizations "concerned with the promotion of comprehensive security within the OSCE area." Leaving aside the fact that neither the CSTO nor the CIS would meet the criteria specified in the PCS, we and some of our NATO allies have expressed concerns about any steps toward such a meeting, which would put these organizations on an equal footing with NATO. Although the recent change in the Greek government seems to have weakened plans to propose or support such a meeting on the margins of the Athens ministerial, we remain uncertain whether the Greeks have sufficiently internalized our opposition.

Frozen Conflicts

¶9. (SBU) Leaving aside tactical and process considerations, the CP potentially carries with it the seeds for tackling Europe's frozen conflicts -- Moldova/Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh and even Georgia and its breakaway regions. In establishing a common framework for considering the factors that contribute to conflict and confrontation as well as making more effective use of new or improved instruments for resolution, the CP has played a valuable role in focusing attention on needed next steps. It is still too early for a firm conclusion, and the situation in Georgia remains bleak, but the fact that the involved parties can sit in the same room and freely express their perspectives and views--generally without histrionics--is a meaningful step forward.

Kazakhstan and an OSCE Summit

x. (SBU) As this stage of the CP reaches its end game at Athens, the incoming Kazakh Chairmanship and its plans to host a summit in 2010 are increasingly roiling the waters. Delegations are concerned about the Kazakh Chairmanship's

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suitability and capability to manage the CP, questioning their exposure and experience, along with their potential lack of even-handedness, given their apparent fealty to a Russian-centric view of the world. In addition, in their quest for a summit the Kazakhs seem prepared to hijack the substance and purpose of the Corfu process, and use the ongoing discussions under this framework both as a justification for and an output of the summit. In particular, they spoke about using the summit to launch: 1) "a process of negotiations on issues related to the security of Europe," including new threats; 2) negotiations "on key issues of security in Europe," such as CFE and CSBMs; and 3) reviewing and strengthening instruments to assist in implementation of existing commitments, especially in the human dimension. We will need to push back firmly on any notion that the little progress so far realized in the Vienna discussions is ripe for any sort of high-level review or push. Unfortunately, some countries appear ready to support the Summit idea. However, there are indications that the Kazakhs may in fact still be searching for the perfect topic and format to showcase their president and country in a high-level meeting.

USOSCE continues to suggest alternatives to a Summit that might satisfy this desire.

OUR NEXT STEPS

¶10. (SBU) We should arrive in Athens prepared to agree to a CP Declaration and Decision that takes the process to the

next phase, to a dialogue that is more focused and deeper, involving a wider range of participants. These documents will represent the highlights of the Ministerial and solidify the process of political dialogue for 2010. USOSCE will continue to oppose using the CP as a justification for a 2010 summit. We should also hold firm against efforts to subjugate the process to Russia's aims for a legally-binding treaty and a high-level meeting of the five major European security organizations.

FULLER